

What are the Information Needs of Communities & Citizens? I rely on the internet for my daily news. That, and PBS and public radio. Without these three sources I would never get any in-depth news. National network news gives 20 second sound bites, often parroting reports from real news outlets like AP. Cable news channels have become mouthpieces for a particular political point of view. When I go in a restaurant that has Fox News on I usually just walk out. Without the internet I would never be able to get the information I need. Only public television and radio cover local government in-depth. I can get election results and weather storm warnings from local commercial TV but little else. Policy debates and local issues beyond car crashes and today's new murder are covered only on public airwaves. Local stations do investigative reporting but if I hear how this station or that is asking the "tough questions" one more time, especially when they aren't, I think I will throw up on my TV screen.

How is Commercial Media Serving Your Community?

Except for public television and radio, commercial media serves our market poorly. Local stations are all about car crashes and sensationalized local investigations that amount to little or nothing in the daily lives of the public. NO ONE does the tough work of investigating local government corruption or industries that import illegal immigrants like the carpet industry in Dalton. It's all about restaurants with dirty kitchens.

And if the FCC allows Comcast to go through with the takeover of NBC it will be exactly the same kind of monopoly that the government broke up in the 1930's when movie studios owned both the means of production and the theaters, i.e., method of delivery. This is EXACTLY the same thing.

The FCC needs to take back its power and declare the internet a method of communication, which it is, and the largest by a wide margin all over the country. Soon, more people will get their information and news on the internet than all other media combined.

And after that, the FCC should use its power to do what it is supposed to do in the first place, namely make sure local stations do programs of service to the local community, not just the news.

What is the State of Noncommercial, Nonprofit, and Public Media?

We have good public TV and radio in our area. We are lucky to have two PBS stations serving Atlanta and I am grateful. I try to support them every year. Right now, if it were not for public media, no one in this area would get a thimble full of real news and in-depth reporting. NO ONE else does it. And with a failing newspaper that is laying off all reporters, NO local reporting of any depth is done in this market. It is imperative that public media get support from the government as well as the public. The public does support local public media, but it is tough for these stations. They could use some help.

The thing is, reporting on public television should NOT be different from commercial media reporting.

Commercial media should be doing what public media does! Recently I saw an old Walter Cronkite interview he did with President Kennedy. It ran for over three minutes on the CBS Evening News. IN PRIME TIME! And it was riveting. That's the way they used to do it. And that's the way it ought to be. Now, everything is 20 seconds or less with no room for real reporting. If reporters had been allowed to pursue real reporting on the run-up to the war in Iraq, how might things have been different?

That's one of the reasons why news web sites are definite competition for the local and national airwaves. I get MUCH better information on the web than from any form of broadcast. Plus, I can do my own back up research and follow the line of reporting back to the source to check for authenticity. When it is broadcast, I just have to take their word for it.

Non-commercial media is absolutely essential for education, arts, and children's programming. Without them, there would BE no programming for education, arts, and children. Commercial media simply doesn't give a damn because there is no money in it.

What is the Impact of the Internet and Mobile Information?

Net neutrality is an absolute imperative. NO internet service providers should be able to edit what we see or don't see on the net. There should be NO gateway.

Internet service providers in my area are being disingenuous when they tell us that all service is the same. Both the cable and DSL providers slow down the speed at different times and they definitely slow the speed for dial-up providers. Before I switched to DSL I routinely got 24 baud rate transmission even though I had a 56K modem.

As far as I know, I can get all news online. My friends with iPhones get the news they want as well. Social Networks are here to stay and service providers better get geared up for all the data that will be streaming over them. Soon, everything will be linked.

Our local governments are online. But the information is often hard to get and the web sites are ridiculously hard to use, especially Georgia state tax payment sites. And the IRS site isn't much better. It's very tough for small business people like me to understand and use those tax payment sites without messing up and incurring penalties that cost lots of money. My blood pressure is rising just writing about them.